

Phil 4330 A/ Phil 5350 A

Relational Theory: Past and Present

Christine Koggel

Winter 2026

Tuesdays: 11:35- 2:25

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00-2:00 or by appointment (meetings can also be by Zoom)

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Course Description (from the Calendar)

PHIL 4330 [0.5 credit] Seminar in Social or Political Philosophy

Detailed study of selected issues in social or political philosophy.

PHIL 5350 [0.5 credit] Topics in Ethics or Political Philosophy

A detailed study of an issue or the work of selected philosophers in the general areas of ethics or political philosophy. Topics may vary from year to year.

Course Description for winter 2026

This course will explore relational accounts of human beings and the implications for moral and political theory. Relational accounts can be contrasted with Modern and especially Western liberal accounts that tend to focus on individuals and the rights and freedoms that attach to individuals apart from contexts and conditions. We start with readings by philosophers such as Aristotle, Mary Wollstonecraft, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx. We then turn to more recent relational approaches in readings by African philosophers and communitarianism, Indigenous thought, and capability approaches. In each case, we juxtapose readings from the past with the present to provide critical perspectives on accounts that have focused on sociality as such or on individuals as such to explore implications and applications of relational approaches to topics such as virtue ethics, agency and autonomy, justice, and ideal theorizing. Juxtaposing relational theory as conceived in the past with more recent developments in relational theory allows us to explore feminist insights from approaches and frameworks such as an ethic of care, epistemic injustice, standpoint epistemology, anti-oppression theory, intersectionality, and non-ideal theory. We end the course by exploring issues such as the applications of relational approaches to issues such as colonialism, poverty, and to academic research in the global North about people and conditions in the global South, issues that are all impacted by relationships of power.

Academic Integrity. You are responsible for ensuring that you understand the nature of academic offences (such as plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration), as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#)). Also read the section “Plagiarism” in the Department Policies below (p. 5-6): “As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described in the course outline with the instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.” Bottom line—talk to me or I may have to talk to you.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, a successful student should be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge of concepts and theories central to the course and of critiques/extensions/departures from these.

- 2) Demonstrate knowledge of a range of feminist theories and approaches that present challenges to early relational accounts or traditional mainstream liberal/Western theory.
- 3) Explore the applications, including the limits, of the theories studied, and examine possibilities for increasing knowledge and new lines of inquiry as these apply to the central theme of relational theory.
- 4) Practice the principle of charity and the strongest possible interpretations of selected texts.
- 5) Be able to write about and critique or defend complex central ideas and arguments from selected sources.

Course Requirements

All the readings (see below on Week-by-Week readings) are free and posted on Brightspace.

Seminar Participation

Worth 25% of the final grade.

The participation part of the grade will be determined on the basis of attendance in weekly seminars, completion of weekly readings, and ability to engage in informed and thoughtful discussion of the readings week by week.

Class Presentation

Worth 25% of the final grade

You will consult with the instructor about which of the readings in a particular week you want/plan to cover. Graduate students should count on covering two of the readings--depending on length of readings in a particular week and Undergraduate students should cover one of the readings.

Good presentations will be ones where you do not just read what you have prepared. Presentations should begin by outlining the main arguments/central points of the agreed upon readings you will cover for that particular class. Please avoid summarizing the details of the readings. Instead, hit the highlights. Next, you should present your own analysis and/or critical reflections on the main arguments and central points of the reading. The presentation and critical reflection should take about 20-25 minutes and should set the stage for the class discussion about 20-25 minutes (Undergraduates can take 15-20 minutes for presentation and 15-20 minutes for discussion). For the discussion part, you can bring a set of questions to the class OR allow the discussion to emerge from your presentation. While your presentation will focus on only one or two readings, it will be important, as always, to do all the readings for that week. This will help to facilitate a full, comprehensive discussion and allow you to make use of another reading in that same week in your analysis/critical reflection. **You will need to submit a copy of your presentation at the end of the class or at the beginning of the class that follows at the latest.**

Presentations will be marked on the following:

- a) your command of the argument(s) and your ability to provide a succinct, clear statement of the main argument(s) and central points;
- b) the quality of your analysis, reflection, and critique;
- c) your ability to respond to questions and lead an engaging discussion;
- d) your presentation style: Can you do this without reading your copy of the presentation? Is your voice clear and audible? How are the pace and flow? Is the presentation engaging and interesting?

Outline of the Final Paper

Worth 15% of the final grade.

Prepare an outline of your topic proposal and bibliography that identifies what you will do for your final term paper. See the description for the Final Term Paper below for more information on how to identify your topic.

For undergraduates: The outline of your topic proposal should be approx. 600 words in length, and it should identify the topic of your term paper, your thesis statement and/or research question, a rough outline of your intended paper, and an annotated bibliography of whatever sources you have gathered as you've prepared your proposal.

For graduates: The outline of your topic proposal should be approx. 750 words in length, and it should identify the topic of your term paper, your thesis statement and/or research question, a rough outline of your intended paper, and an annotated bibliography of whatever sources you have gathered as you've prepared your proposal.

The outline of your topic proposal and annotated bibliography should be submitted to me no later than the end of the final day of classes on April 8th (could also be Saturday, April 11th if necessary), so that I can provide feedback ahead of you writing and revising your final paper.

Final Term Paper

Worth 35% of the final grade.

Undergraduate papers should be between 3000-4000 words in length. Graduate papers should be between 4000-5000 words in length.

Final term papers must explore a topic related to our readings in the course. You may choose to examine one of our topics/themes in greater detail or examine a topic related to the course that builds on that topic/theme. As per the instructions for the Outline of the Final Paper, you will submit your outline of your topic proposal no later than April 10th to have it approved and to get initial feedback. The research paper must present a clear argument and use at least two or three outside sources (scholarly books or articles) in addition to three or four readings from the course outline. There are several ways to identify a topic: do more detailed work on a presentation you did in class by expanding the analysis to a particular question that may have been raised in several other readings in the course; discuss a relational account from the past (an historical figure) along with contemporary interpretations, appropriations, and critiques of it; or compare and contrast two theoretical approaches – such as the capabilities approach, Marxist analysis, feminist standpoint theory, ethic of care, feminist relational theory. These are just some examples.

Evaluation of the paper is based on (in declining order of importance):

- a) the accuracy of your summaries/outlines of the authors and arguments that you cover;
- b) the merits (originality, persuasiveness) of the author arguments and being able to situate yourself with respect to the argument or position you defend in relation to those in the literature that you use;
- c) the logic, flow, and clarity of the pieces of the paper that lead to and support your approach and argument;
- d) the appropriateness and relevance of the cited readings (including a consistent citation style); writing style and clarity (syntax, grammar, etc.).

Week by Week Course Readings

Readings will be posted on Brightspace (Library Reserves – Ares) and may be altered if necessary.

Week 1: January 6

Organizational meeting

Week 2: January 13

Aristotle. *Politics* translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Book I, Chapter 2

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* 2nd ed. Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary by Terence Irwin. Book IX [Friendship]

Cooper, John M. “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle” in *Aristotle’s Ethics: Critical Essays* edited by Nancy Sherman, p. 277-300. Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Week 3: January 20 – Adam Smith and David Hume

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* edited by Knud Haakonssen. Cambridge University Press, 2002: Part I, Section I, Chapters I-IV

Hume, David. *A Treatise on Human Nature* edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge. 2nd edition. Oxford. Book III, Part I, Sections I-II and Part III, Section I.

Thomas, Laurence “Moral Deference” from *Theorizing Multiculturalism*. (p. 359-381).

(For background on Smith and Hume, read the Introduction to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* from the edition above)

Week 4: January 27 – Mary Wollstonecraft and Contemporary Interpretations

Wollstonecraft. Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Revised edition. Penguin Books. Chapter I-IV, Chapters VII, Chapter IX.

Muller, Virginia L. “What can Liberals Learn from Mary Wollstonecraft?” in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria J. Falco, p. 47-60. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

Gunther-Canada, Wendy. “Mary Wollstonecraft’s ‘Wild Wish’: Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights” in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria J. Falco, p. 61-83. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

Week 5: February 3 – David Hume and Contemporary Interpretations

Hume, David. *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* edited by J.B. Schneewind. Hackett Publishing. Sections I-IV

Hirschmann, Nancy. “Sympathy, Empathy, and Obligation: A Feminist Rereading” in *Feminist Interpretations of David Hume* edited by Anne Jaap Jacobson p. 174-193. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Baier, Annette. “Hume: The Women’s Moral Theorist?” In *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*, 51-75. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Week 6: February 10 – Adam Smith and Karl Marx – Division of Labour

Smith, Adam, (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Liberty Fund edition (edited by R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner).

I. i-ii (Book 1, chapters 1-2)

I. viii (Book 1, chapter 8)

Marx, Karl. (1848) *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. *Critique of the Gotha Program* Section I: 525-534.

Marx, Karl. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* “Estranged Labour”: 70-81.

Young, Iris Marion. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Chapter 2 “Five Faces of Oppression” (39-65).

Winter Break - February 16-20

Week 7: February 24 – Friedrich Engels and Feminist Standpoint Theory

Engels, Friedrich. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd edition. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. “The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State”: 734-759.

Hartmann, Heidi. “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union.” *Capital & Class* 3.2 (1979): 1-33.

Hartsock, Nancy. (2004) “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”, in Harding, Sandra. *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies*, New York: Routledge, pp. 35–54.

Week 8: March 3 - Indigenous Thought

Coulthard, Glen Sean. (2014) *Red Skin, White Masks*. University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 4, “Seeing Red” and Conclusion, “Lessons from Idle No More”.

Hunfeld, Katharina (2022) “The coloniality of time in the global justice debate: decentring Western linear temporality” in *Journal of Global Ethics Special Issue: Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications*, v. 18, no. 1: 100-117.

Szende, Jennifer (2022) “Relational value, land, and climate justice” in *Journal of Global Ethics Special Issue: Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications*, v. 18, no. 1: 118-133.

Week 9: March 10 - African philosophy and Communitarianism

Gyeke, Kwame. “Person and Community in African Thought” in *The African Philosophy Reader* 2nd edition edited by P.H. Coetzee & A.P.J. Roux, p. 348-366. Taylore and Francis Group, 2003.

Downie, Jocelyn and Jennifer Llewellyn Eds. (2012) *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law* “Introduction”: 1-10. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Koggel, Christine, Ami Harbin and Jennifer Llewellyn (2022) “Feminist Relational Theory” in *Journal of Global Ethics Special Issue: Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications*, v. 18, no. 1: 1-14.

Baylis, Françoise. “The Self *in Situ*: A Relational Account of Personal Identity” in *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law* edited by J. Downie and J. Llewellyn, 109-131. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.

Week 10: March 17 - Capabilities approach

Sen, Amartya. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books: “Introduction” (3-11).

Nussbaum, Martha. (2011) *Creating Capabilities*. Harvard University Press: Chapter 1 “A Women Seeking Justice” (1-16) and Chapter 2 “The Central Capabilities” (17-45).

Robeyns, Ingrid. (2017) *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined*. Open Book Publishers. Chapter 4, “Critiques and Debates” (169-210)

Koggel, Christine. (2019) “Book Review: Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined, Ingrid Robeyns.” *Economics and Philosophy* 35: 575–580.

Murphy, Susan P. “The relationship between poverty and prosperity: a feminist relational account” in *Journal of Global Ethics Special Issue: Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications*, v. 18, no. 1: 82-99.

Week 11: March 24 - Reframing Moral and Political Theory Part 1

Gilligan, Carol. (1993) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. “Letter to Readers” (ix-xxvii), “Introduction” (1-4), and Chapter 2 (24-63).

Baier, Annette. (1995) “The Need for More than Justice.” In *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*, 18-32. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mudde, Anna E. “Crafting Relations and feminist practices of access” in *Journal of Global Ethics Special Issue: Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications*, v. 18, no. 1: 64-81.

Week 12: March 31- Reframing Moral and Political Theory Part 2

Tronto, Joan C. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. Part Three: Chapter Five. NY: Routledge: 125-155.

Fricker, Miranda. (2006) “Powerlessness and Social Interpretation.” *Episteme* 3 (1-2): 96-108.

Koggel, Christine. (2023) “Indigenous Voices and Relationships: Insights from Care Ethics and Accounts of Hermeneutical Injustice” in *Decentering Epistemologies and Challenging Privilege: Critical Care Ethics Perspective*. Edited by Sophie Bourgault, Maggie FitzGerald and Fiona Robinson, 15-30. Rutgers University Press.

Week 13: April 7 – Relationships of Power: Implications for Academic Research

Relational Theory: Feminist Approaches, Implications, and Applications. Edited by Christine Koggel, Ami Harbin, and Jennifer Llewellyn. Routledge, 2025: Chapters 16-18 (articles by E. Emilia Bianco and M. Brinton Lykes; Elise J. van der Mark et. al.; and Marie-Pier Lemay).

Outline of Proposal for Final Term Paper due on April 8th or April 11th at the latest.

All Final Term Papers due on final deadline for course work on April 23, 2026

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2025-26)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. We no longer allow hard copies to be placed in the department's essay box.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as '*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*' This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source.

Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the full meaning of ‘plagiarism’ as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Statement on AI:

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described in the course outline with the instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Mental Health:

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

Academic Accommodation:

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline). Examples of special arrangements include:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EIC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 3	Classes start.
Sept. 16	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Oct. 13	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 20-24	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 21	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 5	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 6-7	No classes or examinations take place.
Dec. 8-20	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 20	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 5	Classes begin.
Jan. 16	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 16	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 16-20	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 25	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 3	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 8	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. <i>Classes follow a Friday schedule.</i> Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 11-23	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:

www.carleton.ca/philosophy

520-2110

Registrar's Office:

www.carleton.ca/registrar

520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:

www.carleton.ca/academicadvising

520-7850

Writing Services:

<https://carleton.ca/csas/support/>

520-3822

MacOdrum Library

<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>

520-2735